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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 COLOMBO 001399

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR SA, SA/INS, S/CT
NSC FOR E. MILLARD

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [PINS](#) [PREF](#) [CE](#) [NO](#) [FR](#) [LTTE](#)

SUBJECT: Norwegian facilitator set to arrive to work on LTTE base issue; Tigers get ready for Paris meeting

Refs: Colombo 1387, and previous

(U) Classified by James F. Entwistle,
Charge' d'Affaires. Reasons 1.5 (b, d).

¶11. (C) SUMMARY: Norwegian Special Envoy Erik Solheim is slated to arrive in Sri Lanka on August 12. One key purpose of his visit is to try to convince the Tigers to vacate an unauthorized camp they have set up in the east. In other peace process news, the Tigers are getting ready for a seminar in Paris scheduled to begin August 20. Solheim is known to have good links with the Tigers, but settling the camp issue will be a tough sell given the group's hard-line stance on the matter. END SUMMARY.

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Solheim due in Sri Lanka

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¶12. (SBU) The Norwegian Embassy has confirmed that Special Envoy Erik Solheim, a key player on the GoN peace facilitation team, is due to arrive in Sri Lanka on August 12. One key purpose of his visit, which is slated to last several days, is to try to convince the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) organization to vacate an unauthorized camp it has set up in Trincomalee District in the east. In July, the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM) had ruled that the "Wan Ela" camp was an encroachment on GSL-controlled areas and thus a violation of the February 2002 ceasefire accord. With the LTTE adamantly refusing to vacate the site, the SLMM washed its hands of the matter last week and referred it to the Norwegian facilitators to resolve, thus setting the stage for Solheim's visit. During his time in Sri Lanka, Solheim is tentatively scheduled to travel to the LTTE-controlled Vanni region in the north to meet with S.P. Thamilchelvam, the group's political chief. Solheim has met with Thamilchelvam on many occasions and is said to have good rapport with him.

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More info on LTTE Camp

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¶13. (C) Regarding the camp, Mission checked with the SLMM office in Trincomalee, which confirmed that as of earlier today (August 11) the LTTE was still at the site. SLMM Trincomalee chief Abdel Burkan confirmed that his office will continue to run daily patrols in the vicinity of the camp to check on the situation. Per earlier remarks he has made to us (See Reftels), Burkan said the roughly 15 LTTE inhabitants of the camp remained friendly with the monitors. The camp was small, about two soccer fields in size, and very ramshackle with some huts, a tent, and a communications antenna. Burkan estimated that the camp could be dismantled quickly if the Tigers wanted to do so.

¶14. (C) Queried on whether he had heard of any other LTTE camps encroaching on government areas, Burkan said the monitors were examining one LTTE-occupied site which seemed to be new. The site was located one/two kilometers away from Wan Ela at a place called Uparu. Whether the camp violated the ceasefire accord had not yet been determined, he added. (Note: The Sri Lankan military has told us that it thinks that, in addition to Wan Ela, the LTTE may have established at least four additional bases in the east in past months.)

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Tigers get ready for Paris

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¶15. (C) In other peace process developments, the Tigers are getting ready for a seminar in Paris scheduled to begin on August 20. The seminar, which is slated to last approximately a week, will focus on constitutional/legal issues. The seminar is also being structured to help the LTTE decide on the nature of its response to the GSL's recent proposal setting out

modalities of forming a Tiger-dominated interim administration for the the north/east. Contacts in the Tamil community have confirmed that the LTTE's delegation will consist of approximately 20 people, 10 from the group and 10 representing pro-LTTE Tamils who live in other countries. Thamilchelvam will lead the delegation. The following names are also reportedly on the delegation list:
-- Pulithevan (one name only), chief of the LTTE's Peace Secretariat

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-- V. Rudrakumar, a pro-LTTE lawyer living in the U.S.

-- Dr. V.T. Thamilmaran, a law lecturer at Colombo University with close LTTE links

-- J. Maheswaran, a pro-LTTE Tamil based in Australia with significant experience on humanitarian assistance issues

16. (SBU) There are reports that Thamilchelvam may meet with Anton Balasingham, the LTTE's London-based chief negotiator, somewhere in Europe before the Paris meeting takes place. Balasingham, who has serious health problems, apparently will not attend the Paris event himself. In the meantime, the pro-LTTE website "TamilNet" reported that Thamilchelvam spoke to a rally in the Vanni on August 10. In his wide-ranging remarks, Thamilchelvam made clear that the group was intent on preparing a response to the GSL's north/east proposal, indicating that the peace talks could resume if the group's (as yet unidentified) counter-proposals were accepted. He stated, in part:

"We would be ready to resume negotiations if the Sinhala nation accepts our proposal for the interim administration and follows the path of peace. We will prepare and submit a proposal for an interim administration that would essentially reflect the aspirations and expectations of our people...International legal experts and senior academics will discuss the proposal before it is given in final form. An interim administration is indispensable to mend the war-shattered lives of our people."

Aside from these basically upbeat remarks, Thamilchelvam also made semi-threatening comments to the effect that Tamils should be allowed to choose their own "destiny" if the LTTE's counter-proposals were rejected by the GSL. He also took the opportunity to get his licks in against two long-standing targets of Tiger vituperation, President Kumaratunga and the Sri Lankan military. Dredging up the history of past military campaigns, Thamilchelvam basically accused the president and the army of being warmongers and anti-Tamil in intent.

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COMMENT
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17. (C) Of all of the Norwegian facilitators, Solheim is known to have the best links with the Tigers. He has dealt with them for years and knows the topmost LTTE leaders as well as any outsider. Even with these advantages, settling the camp issue will be a tough sell for Solheim. The group has taken an increasingly hard-line stance on the issue. Solheim will have to use all of his many wiles to convince them that their stance is self-defeating. As for Paris, the Tigers seem to want to use the meeting in a genuine way to review legal issues. Thamilchelvam, for one, appears to be going out of his way to flag that the Tigers are taking the government's proposal very seriously. END COMMENT.

18. (U) Minimize considered.

ENTWISTLE